Left Caucus newsletter

Published by the Steering Committee
of the
ONDP Left Caucus
Station G., Box 92
1075 Queen St. E.
Toronto M4M 1H0

MAY, 1986
VOL. 1, NO. 3

ONT. LEFT CAUCUS SUPPORTS ACTIVIST PARTY CAMPAIGN

The most serious challenge in over a decade to the status quo of the Ontario NDP has been launched in a campaign over policy and representation on the party executive to be decided by the delegates to the June 20-21 convention.

Endorsed in principle by the ONDP Left Caucus conference last fall, what has become known as the Campaign for an Activist Party has been winning the support of hundreds of activists.

The campaign aims to root the party in all the energetic social movements which are fighting for equality, justice, solidarity and peace. Its program encompasses all the major concerns of the party including opposition to funding RC high schools, the fight for party democracy and more broadly-based political discussion and debate of key issues, proper funding of ridings and a commitment to grass roots organizing and identification with social movements and struggles to a varying extent still outside of the party.

Having already endorsed Judy Rebick, a prominent spokesperson of the pro-choice movement, as a candidate for president, a May 4th rally endorsed a further number of persons who in varying degrees are identified with the party but in some cases are prominent in their own right in movements that are only supportive of the NDP. It is hoped through this campaign that these movements will come to increasingly identify with and become active in the party and help to revitalize it.

The struggle to develop socialist policy and political practice in the NDP is an ongoing one. The campaign for an Activist Party is very much part of a process of moving the NDP in that direction, one which the Left Caucus has promoted for some time. The Left Caucus in Ontario will continue to play that role for the long term.

David Tomczak, St. A & P
Co-Chair, Left Caucus

RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES OF CAMPAIGN FOR AN ACTIVIST PARTY

President	Judy Rebick
Vice President	(Metro female) Mary Rowles
Vice President	(Metro male) George Ehring
Vice President	(S. Ont. male) Malcolm Buchanan
Foreign Affairs	Marv Gandall
Treasurer	David Tomczak
Metro (two women)	Pat Findlay, Diane Meaghan
Metro (two men)	Gord Doctorow, Allan Millard
Ottawa	Fred Gloger, Anne John Baptiste
Kingston	Pamela Cross

This lists the candidates endorsed by the campaign as of its Toronto meeting on May 4th. It is expected that as the campaign gets more widely known, the number of recommended candidates may increase.

SERIES OF LEFT CAUCUS FORUMS STIMULATE METRO AREA NDP

At the ONDP Left Caucus annual conference held in Toronto last fall, over 50 leading party activists discussed and adopted the general line of a document "Political Action and Organizing for the 1986 Provincial Convention".

A 16 member Steering Committee was elected. It was mandated to take appropriate steps to promote the following:

- Freedom of choice, defence of Dr. Morgantaler and the building of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics,
- Equal pay for work of equal value,
- Defend our trade unions,
- Preservation of public education and the defeat of Bill 30,
- A shorter work week at the same take home pay,
- The interaction of the NDP riding associations and the anti-war movement,
- Increased spending on socially neces-

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SUCCESSFUL NDP YOUTH CONVENTION ELECTS LEFT WING LEADERSHIP

Sixty-One Ontario New Democratic Youth participated in the annual conference held on the U of T campus May 10-11.

Outgoing '85-86 campus organizer Neil Fettes opened his speech for president by challenging the ONDPY to be proud to declare themselves socialists. Neil was elected president by a vote of 45 against 3 for his opponent, who campaigned in support the Accord and public funding of RC high schools.

The elections were a victory for the left with four supporters of the Left Caucus elected to the executive: Neil Fettes, President; Lesley Nicholls, vice-president; Andrew McNeill, secretary and Nick Marchese, communications director. The two voted as endorsed youth delegates to the ONDP executive are Nicholls and

Lesley Nicholls, vice-president, ONDPY

THE LEFT CAUCUS WARNED THAT THE LIBERAL/NDP ACCORD IS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PARTY

One year ago ONDP Left Caucus activists in a petition they circulated at the June provincial council meeting warned that the Accord the parliamentary caucus has committed the party to with the capitalist Liberal party machine is "fraught with danger for our party".

Aside from hardening the leadership's committment to its increasingly contested support of public funding of RC high schools, the Accord by its very nature of being acceptable to the Liberals, covers over all the major features that distinguish the NDP from the Liberals while they prepare for an election with the aim of turning their minority into a majority. The Accord, warned the Left Caucus statement, sets our own party onto the path of "accommodation and coalition with the Liberals".

How Bob Rae himself saw the Accord was not revealed in any of the discussions such as were held before the party membership. He blurted it out over CBC's Morningside, "Coalition with the Liberal party is next on the agenda and that's good", he said. Since then various off-the-cuff remarks reveal that many caucus members are now aiming not to build the NDP as an independent force for socialism but to win a post not so subject to electoral chance and which they vainly hope will be useful, in a cabinet of an NDP-Liberal Coalition government. Regret that this has not already taken place has been expressed by several caucus members, with Richard Johnson telling a Left Caucus-sponsored forum that the princpled tradition of no coalitions with capitalist parties has to be "rethought" by NDP'ers.

The only reason for there not being a coalition is the simple fact that the Liberals see no need for one. They are increasingly confident that they will sweep the next election. The Accord that has served to muffle the NDP, convinced them of that, as recent polls affirm a decline in NDP support is taking place.

This adventure shows a weakness in leadership and the urgency of strengthening the party's commitment to the building of a socialist democracy in Canada.

Ross Dowson, St. George

SERIES OF LEFT CAUCUS FORUMS

Continued from overleaf.

sary job creation projects,
- public ownership of idle plants.

With the decline of participation in the riding associations and their depoliticization, the Left Caucus decided to initiate a series of forums dealing with the concerns of NDP'ers in the Toronto area. The first one dealt with Public Funding of Catholic High Schools and featured Diane Meaghan, "Feminism and the Catholic Schools", Malcolm Buchanan on the "Struggle to Preserve Public Education" and Gordon Doctorow on, "A Socialist Perspective on Public Education".

The January forum on Nicaragua commenced with a dramatic introduction by Lois Stuart and the slides she and her spouse Walter, had taken on a recent visit there.

Dan Heap, NDP MP, Spadina reported on his trip to Nicaragua. He scored Ottawa for tailoring its relations with Nicaragua to the hostile assaults of the U.S. State Department.

The third forum, Pay Equity - A Socialist-Feminist Perspective, featured analysis and discussion with Frances Lankin, vice-president of the ONDP and a member of the Equal Pay Coalition, and Diane Meaghan, education co-ordinator of the ONDP Left Caucus, co-chairperson of New Democrats to Preserve Public Education and a 1985 Ontario election candidate, and Richard Johnson, MPP, Scarborough West.

The Left Caucus will expand its forums in the fall of 1986.

Lois Bedard, High Park Swanea

"LOSING OUR SOUL", DECLARES DOCTOROW IN POLICY CONFERENCE DEBATE ON EXTENSION OF SEPARATE SCHOOL FUNDING

The following is the text of a speech made at the ONDP Education Policy Conference debate on Separate School funding on Feb. 23, 1986.

I would like to address two questions. Is the policy of extending separate school funding consistent with or a denial of socialist and democratic principles? How is the NDP's future affected, as a party and as a movement, by the policy position (on separate school funding) we may choose to adopt at the coming provincial convention?

New Democrats should uphold the democratic doctrine of separation of church and state in order to guarantee formal equality of all religions before the law. In Ontario, there are 34 religious categories, according to the 1981 Census, the 4th largest of which (some 620,000) indicated no religious preference. This is a clear indication of the secular trend of society and of its highly pluralistic character as we head into the 21st century.... In essence the majority argued that, since Confederation was founded on a principle of inequality and privilege for particular religious groups, then this aspect of the Canadian past should be perpetuated. ... Of course there's the argument about guarantees provided in the Constitution of 1867 - a past arrangement of previous elites. Is the NDP the party that maintains the dead hand of the past? Or are we the party that seeks to reform towards the future? ... A socialist policy fosters the unity of working class youth and the poor and disadvantaged. It also fosters unity among education workers. But Bill 30 (the proposed separate school funding legislation) is a prescription for fractious disunity. ... Our support for funding a sectarian school system will be a permanent stain on the party's banner. ...

This issue edited by Lois Bedard
Co-Chair of the Left Caucus

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November, 1986
Vol. 1, No. 4

CAMPAIGN FOR ACTIVIST PARTY AND ONDP LEFT CAUCUS UNITE

Every fall the Ontario NDP Left Caucus meets to plan its next year's activities. This year is the most important yet - it will be a celebration! What with the fruitful collaboration of the forces attracted to the Campaign for an Activist Party and the Left Caucus at the provincial convention, their respective steering committees have been meeting both separately and together.

This year's Nov. 29 conference will see them make a joint recommendation that we join our forces in order to play a more effective continuing role in the NDP and in the radicalization generally. Some of the problems will be discussed at the coming conference and a new leadership will be elected. And so we face the coming year in comraderie and confidence in our cause.

Lois Bedard, High Park-Swansea

PROTEST THE IMPRISONMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND UNION LEADER

An across-Canada campaign in solidarity with Fraser March, the Newfoundland trade union leader who was recently sentenced to four months in jail for leading an illegal strike, should be initiated by the Canadian Labour Congress.

Over the past several months, March led the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees in protest and strike actions to eliminate discrepancies of up to 33% between the wage levels of public service workers performing essentially the same jobs. The struggle was in defiance of and aimed at smashing Bill 59, an ammendment to the Public Service collective agreement.It declared 49% of the union's members are to be considered "essential service workers" and thereby denied the right to strike. It assigned this devisive task as to who was to be included in the 49%, to the union.

In the course of the struggle, March, Newfoundland NDP Leader Peter Fenwick, CLC executive member John Fryer, and senior union negotiators Hank MacKeil and Tom Hanlon were all arrested. March was sentenced to jail for four months and the union was fined $110,000. The NDP has played a conspicuous role in the strike, one worker saying of provincial NDP leader Fenwick: "He's a hero on the picket line".

Bill Clinton, Scarborough-Agincourt

TORIES PREPARING THE BURIAL OF THE CANADIAN FAMILY FARM

The death knell of the "family farm" though "even the most rabid free enterpriser in Progressive Conservative ranks knows better than to threaten this sacred cow in public," is now being sounded, according to Saskatchewan Commonwealth Editor Ron Thompson. Slowly and quietly a long-range farm policy has been emerging from the back rooms of the federal and provincial PCs - a policy that spells the death of the family farm in favour of the large scale corporate agri-business and even "franchise farming".

Thousands of farmers have been forced off the land and many thousands more are threatened. The Farm Credit Corporation reports one in five (about 39,000) who haven't already left is in serious financial difficulty. Of these, 6,000 are considered doomed. What relief is being offered is short term only - a brief pause in the journey from family farm to corporate shareholder.

From a capitalist prespective it is consistent to weed out the small "uneconomic" units and infact the choice was made years earlier. Last year Tory leader Erik Neilsen's task force report on federal programs called Canadian agriculture out of step with reality, tending to be survival oriented "rather than future oriented toward market growth."

This spring's budget offered a new $50 million transition program for farmers driven off the land. This program will offer former farmers counselling, retraining, relocation grants and possible financial help to farmers not even threatened with foreclosure but who feel they want out. The next step scheduled is the end of the moratorium on foreclosures.

Boyd Robertson, provincial Chamber of Commerce and Royal Bank chief, argues subsidies only prop incefficient producers who shouldn't be in the game. The Royal's vice-president of agriculture services, Doug McCrorie, accepts the need for some short term assistance, so long as governments realize many farmers

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CELEBRATING THE UNIFICATION OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR AN ACTIVIST PARTY (CAP) AND THE ONDP LEFT CAUCUS

Conference on strengthening the left in the Ont. NDP and to plan its participation in the March '87 Montreal federal convention.

Saturday, Nov. 29 9 am to 4:30 pm
Toronto Board of Education (cafeteria,
155 College St., Toronto

CAMPAIGN FOR ACTIVIST PARTY AND LEFT CAUCUS CARRIED FIGHT AGAINST SEPARATE SCHOOL FUNDING

The June Ontario NDP convention witnessed both a dramatic intervention by the left wing of the party and a decisive but, perhaps even in the short term, pyrrhic victory for the Rae parliamentary leadership.

The Left Caucus formed an alliance with some prominent long standing supporters of NDP causes who sought to move the party into a more complete and sustained party-building identity with these causes. This alliance, appropriately named Campaign for an Activist Party (CAP) ran an extensive slate for leadership posts headed by presidential candidate Judy Rebick. The majority of CAP candidates, ranging from vice-presidential to members-at-large contestants, were Left Caucus supporters.

This was ideologically reflected in the common platform which included resolutions advocating a shorter work week at no loss in take-home pay, anti-war and anti-imperialist policies (including the establishment of an executive committee to coordinate these work areas), support for abortion clinics and campaigning for women's rights, and opposition to full funding of Roman Catholic separate secondary schools.

The dispute over separate school funding which took on the form of a full-fledged convention floor debate, long denied over the previous two years as the parliamentary leadership publicly committed the party, polarized the convention. The debate was ably carried in the CAP literature, by Rebick in the presidential contest and by an important new force in the party - New Democrats to Preserve Public Education. It was NDPPE that spearheaded a year-long campaign on this issue. Although it was only able to garner approximately 30% of the vote, it must be understood that the parliament had all but voted on the question and the leadership made this a vote of confidence in itself. Thus the Trade Union Caucus voted en bloc for the leadership as did many others previously associated with the Left.

However the NDPPE position had the support of the party's youth wing, two of its endorsed top officers, Fettes and Nicholls, ran on the CAP slate and were acclaimed. The CAP slate was enhanced and broadened by the inclusion of former Ontario Secondary School Teachers President Malcolm Buchanan as well as three NDP candidates in the 1985 election, Diane Meaghan, Pam Cross and Gordon Doctorow. Votes for CAP candidates ranged from 30% to 50%.

The ideological confusion in the party highlighted by the leaderships' slavish adherence to its pro-separate school policy and its non-aggression pact with the capitalist Liberal Party has not been overcome or put to rest by its ability to carry off the convention. On the contrary it has been heightened. Its shameful ploys for posts in the Liberal Party cabinet has brought a first bitter result in one of the key northern ridings that the Liberals are gunning for to get a majority - the treacherous defection of the Temiskaming MPP to the Liberal party. In his defence he has declared that in the last election he and his committee openly campaigned, not on NDP but on Liberal Party policy.

Once again the Left Caucus is called upon to reorient the party towards an independent working class policy based on socialist principles.

Gordon Doctorow, Oriole

PREPARING THE BURIAL OF FAMILY FARM

(from overleaf)

neither can or should be saved.

University of Western Ontario, professor of business, Charles Lemmon argues "franchise farmers" will be the norm fewer than 20% of farmers will own land and equipment. Instead land franchise corporations will sell shares to private investors and pension and investment funds to buy up land and equipment. A farmer could even trade in his assets on shares.

Unlike the former NDP government's land banks, franchising won't turn farmers into "tenants" or destroy the "Canadian dream" of owning their own land.

MP HEAP LAUNCHES PETITION AGAINST NATO

Early this fall Spadina NDP M.P. Dan Heap pointed out in a widely circulated bulletin that "The government of Canada uses NATO as the excuse to militarize more and more of our economy and to undermine our democratic institutions. Last year, by an overwhelming convention vote, we resolved that we: 'confirm (our) commitment to peace and disarmament by reaffirming its policy calling for Canadian withdrawal from NATO and other military alliances'. However, we are now faced with government demands in the name of NATO, such as the enlarged NATO base at Goose Bay, US nuclear subs visiting Halifax, Toronto, Vancouver and Nanoose Bay, and activities in support of Star Wars and arms exports

"Decision on these matters of life and death are withheld from parliament. How shall we oppose this?" he asked. In a new issue of his newsletter he now supplies an answer: "I suggest that we in the NDP and the peace movement must organized toward two great goals: 1) To reverse the militarization of our economy and our government; 2) To promote a policy that creates employment by using our natural resources and the strength and skill of our people for peaceful purposes. Here is what you can do immediately: 1) Write to Prime Minister Mulroney to say, "Stop the NATO low-level flight training in Labrador and don't let NATO put a large base in Goose Bay. 2) Write to Peter Fenwick, the NDP member in the Newfoundland legislature in St. John's to encourage him to oppose militarization and to support non-military employment. 3) Get signatures on the petition, copies of which can be obtained from my office." Dan Heap, M.P., 323 College St., Toronto, M5T 1L3